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**MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES**

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**THE NEED TO INCREASE MARINE CORPS SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND**

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BY  
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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** THE NEED TO INCREASE MARINE CORPS SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

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**Thesis:** As the U.S. leadership increasingly relies on Special Operations Forces (SOF) to prosecute the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), the U.S. Marine Corps must contribute more forces to USSOCOM in order to optimally support the US strategic objective of combating irregular threats.

**Discussion:** Irregular warfare (IW) is the form of warfare the United States faces for at least the next decade. U.S. conventional warfighting dominance has assured this reality. In 1987 Congress created the Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) in part for the purpose of countering the IW threat with the nation's most elite forces. The Marine Corps did not participate in the pioneering USSOCOM for a variety of reasons. Over time, the Marine Corps decision not to contribute forces proved to be illogical and not been in the best interest of the Marine Corps or the nation. Finally, in 2006, the Marine Corps reluctantly formed the Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) much to the chagrin of many within the Corps. Despite overwhelming evidence that this Marine contribution to USSOCOM is in the best interest of the nation, parochialism is preventing MARSOC from receiving the support it needs to effectively support the U.S. global struggle against extremist threats.

**Conclusion:** National leadership has clearly articulated its belief that SOF are the preferred forces to serve as main effort in the Global War on Terror. The Marine Corps must overcome its institutional bias against special operations forces and fully commit the resources required to ensure MARSOC success.

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## *Preface*

From 1999 to 2005 I had the opportunity to serve in two Marine reconnaissance units and the first post WWII Marine special operations unit. While there I learned firsthand about the resentment conventional/general purpose force Marines feel toward anything deemed “special” or “elite.” This abhorrence of special operations forces exists for a number of reasons and is certainly a factor (one of many) that led to the Marine Corps decision to not send its most highly skilled Marines to USSOCOM in 1987. Unfortunately, this bias also led to a decrease in Marine Corps missions and relevance. This came to a frustrating head for me in 2001-2002 as I sat on amphibious ships off the coast of Pakistan as US SOF ran roughshod all throughout Afghanistan answering the nation’s call for justice after the attacks of 9/11. To add insult to injury, a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) command element came out to my ship, the USS Bonhomme Richard, to evaluate its potential as a JSOTF “lily pad.” CENTCOM was seriously considering disembarking the Marines into Kuwait in order to make room for a task force of Rangers, Green Berets, and Air Force SOF aviation units. Whether or not this JSOTF and the SOF in Afghanistan were a better option than my “special operations capable” Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU SOC) is irrelevant. What mattered is that America’s leadership thought they were, and I don’t believe that this thinking is going to change. That is why I am writing this paper. U.S. Marines have earned the right to be among the “First to Fight.”

I am greatly indebted to my mother Lois and my father-in-law Bob for their numerous reviews of my thesis work, their ideas, and their honest feedback. I also extend my thanks to the faculty of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, who have provided outstanding support and learning opportunities while at the school.

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## **Introduction**

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and Special Operations Forces (SOF) are growing to meet the increasing irregular warfare (IW) challenges posed by violent extremist organizations.<sup>1</sup> Although a tradition of tension exists between conventional military forces and SOF, there is little disagreement within USSOCOM, the broader defense community, and the U.S. civilian leadership, that the current threats facing the United States require a SOF response and an increase in SOF capacity and capability. The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review began with the recognition that IW has become the “warfare of choice” for the United States’ adversaries “who fight us among the people in protracted struggles for popular support and legitimacy, limiting the utility of conventional application of military power.”<sup>2</sup> SOF will remain the force of choice because SOF skill sets and capabilities are optimized to conduct operations against the threat of violent extremist groups practicing IW.

In 1987, USSOCOM was established to serve as an organization for all of the nation’s SOF and to focus on low intensity conflict (LIC) and IW. From USSOCOM’s inception until 2006 the U.S. Marine Corps resisted providing forces to USSOCOM for a variety of reasons. Although acknowledging that the threat of irregular warfare was growing, the Marine Corps favored maintaining a “SOF free” general purpose force and continued to resist providing forces to USSOCOM until Secretary of Defense (SecDef) Rumsfeld ordered a contribution in early 2005.<sup>3</sup> In response, the Marine Corps formed Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC) which ultimately contributed 2500 Marines to USSOCOM, equating to a mere one percent of the entire Marine Corps.<sup>4</sup> Since 2006, MARSOC units have deployed continuously throughout the world. Major General Mastin Robeson, the Commanding General of MARSOC, stated in a

January 2009 interview that “commanders in Afghanistan have asked us to double our forces. Right now I have more requests for MARSOC than I can effectively support.”<sup>5</sup>

Marine Corps general purpose forces do not have the highly seasoned personnel, equipment, training, or capabilities to execute missions to the same standard as SOF. Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCC) and the U.S. civilian leadership recognize this and will always look to minimize risk by leveraging the most capable forces available. As the U.S. leadership increasingly relies on SOF to prosecute the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), the U.S. Marine Corps must contribute more forces to USSOCOM in order to optimally support the US strategic objective of combating irregular threats.

### **Today’s Security Environment and the Future of War**

The emerging security environment facing the United States is one in which adversaries will use IW as their preferred form of warfare. The 2008 National Defense Strategy begins by describing the strategic environment as a global struggle against violent extremism “including a variety of irregular challenges.”<sup>6</sup> Prominent thinkers on military affairs offer slightly different views of conflicts in the coming decades, but most of them agree the conflicts will involve asymmetric and irregular warfare directed to test American resolve by causing as many casualties as possible while frustrating U.S. forces by avoiding conventional war. These enemies know the American public is sensitive to sacrificing members of the military in matters short of national survival. In 1996, Osama bin Laden released a statement referring to the United States’ withdrawal from Somalia after a one day battle that led to the death of 18 U.S. servicemen as proof that the U.S is “too fearful to meet the young people of Islam face to face. When tens of your soldiers were killed and one American Pilot was dragged through the streets of Mogadishu

you left the area carrying disappointment, humiliation, defeat, and your dead with you.”<sup>7</sup> In 2008, President Barack Obama earned the Democratic Party’s nomination over Senator Clinton in part by leveraging the public’s weariness of the Iraq War.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout history armed groups have used IW. Since World War II, insurgent groups have waged IW in Malaysia, Vietnam, Ireland, Central America, Colombia, Afghanistan, Chechnya, throughout the Middle East, and in many other areas. Insurgent successes in practicing IW have emboldened current and future generations of disaffected groups. Afghan mujahedeen compelling the Soviets to withdraw after nearly a decade of combat further proved that numerically and technologically inferior irregular forces can defeat a superior conventional adversary. Al Qaeda precipitated the withdrawal of Spanish forces from Operation Iraqi Freedom by blowing up a train in Spain. The United Nations pulled out of Iraq after a car bomb detonated at the U.N. field office in Baghdad.

The U.S possesses overwhelming conventional military and technical superiority. This capability has pushed the enemies of the U.S. to fight using irregular warfare to avoid U.S. conventional dominance. Enemies know they cannot compete in a conventional military manner with U.S. forces. This fact was reinforced in March of 2002 in eastern Afghanistan during Operation Anaconda when Al Qaeda and Taliban forces that attempted to fight a protracted ground battle with U.S. forces were forced to withdraw after taking hundreds of casualties. Due to U.S. dominance in conventional operations and the perceived ability of IW to effectively counter this dominance, the U.S.’s enemies will continue to try to exhaust the U.S. national will with the use of IW. However, conventional forces alone cannot succeed in IW.<sup>9</sup>

## USSOCOM Inception

In IW, the side that learns and adapts faster usually wins.<sup>10</sup> The military forces that successfully defeat the irregular threat are usually those able to overcome their institutional inclination to wage conventional war against insurgents.<sup>11</sup> For the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) the organization chartered to meet the IW threat is the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa Bay, Florida, and the worldwide forces it deploys.

It is necessary to examine the origin of USSOCOM because the disinclination of the military leadership to support USSOCOM's establishment in 1987 persists in the Marine Corps today. While many within the Marine Corps have come to realize that, in order to maximize use of Marine capabilities, it must be a full partner in USSOCOM, the Corps' institutional aversion to SOF has prevented it from providing the proper resources and support to MARSOC.<sup>12</sup> This aversion was summarized by Lieutenant General Wallace Gregson, former commander of Marine Forces Pacific, when he stated in 2005 that "The best thing to do is to allow us (the Marine Corps) to create the capability, and if the capability is desired by the spec ops community then we will give them control of the task organized detachment for whatever mission they have at hand. We can train them up, and if SOCOM wants to employ them, we can assign them and then bring them back (into the Marine Corps)."<sup>13</sup> The reluctance throughout the armed services to relinquish forces to focus on joint special operations and commit support to the joint community is in part what led to the creation of USSOCOM in 1987, and as LtGen. Gregson confirmed, is still hindering the Marine Corps today.

The DoD activated USSOCOM in 1987 in response to congressional action in the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the Nunn-Cohen Amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act of 1987. With the Service Chiefs focused on the Cold War Soviet threat, this legislation created USSOCOM to ensure that the SOF used to counter irregular threats was resourced and represented within DoD. The legislation also established the Assistant SecDef for Special Operations and LIC (ASD for SO/LIC). Congress was alerted to problems within DoD and with SOF during the 1980 to 1984 timeframe following poor performances in Operations Eagle Claw (Iran attempted hostage rescue, 1980) and Urgent Fury (Grenada invasion, 1983), and the terrorist bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon in 1983.

The military establishment halfheartedly attempted to correct identified problems on its own, but the measures taken were considered vastly inadequate by lawmakers. This insufficient action on the part of DoD and the Service Chiefs, who proved unwilling to adapt to the changing face of conflict, forced Congress to act by passing decisive legislation. Within DoD there were few supporters of a systemic fix to SOF's problems.<sup>14</sup> Susan Marquis, author of *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces*, and member of the U.S. DoD from 1989-1997, explains that this hesitation on the part of the military and DoD is largely due to the ambivalence military leaders in the service departments feel toward SOF. Marquis argues that military decision-makers are well aware of the value of a tank, strategic bomber, or aircraft carrier, but find it more difficult to measure the value of a Special Forces military training team working with military forces in Peru.<sup>15</sup> The Service Chiefs' unwillingness to accept the fact that the military needed to plan for Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) and IW forced Congress to pass legislation.

## **SOF- The Force of Choice for Current and Future War against the Irregular Threat**

In addition to the service-like authorities of developing training and monitoring readiness, some of the authorities Congress granted to USSOCOM were unique, intended to bypass the traditional bureaucracy in order to maintain a rapidly adaptable force. USSOCOM was given its own budgetary authority through a specific Major Force Program (MPF-11) in the DoD budget. Additionally, USSOCOM has its own acquisition authority, so it can quickly develop and acquire special operations-peculiar equipment, supplies, or services.<sup>16</sup> This ability to quickly procure mission essential items sets USSOCOM apart from the services and the GCCs and is critical to accomplishing the rapid adaptation that is required to win in an IW environment.<sup>17</sup>

USSOCOM has approximately 48,000 personnel assigned to the headquarters, its four components, and one sub-unified command.<sup>18</sup> With the increase in roles and responsibilities placed on USSOCOM by DoD, covered subsequently, the organization is expected to grow to over 55,000 personnel by 2010.<sup>19</sup> This increase comes from additional Army Special Forces Battalions, an Army Ranger Battalion, and MARSOC. Some defense experts are suggesting that an even greater expansion of SOF forces and organization is required for the global strategic situation.<sup>20</sup>

The SOF units assigned to USSOCOM have nine core activities that make them especially well suited to wage the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and to counter irregular threats.<sup>21</sup> USSOCOM's emphasis on these missions, global perspective, and SOF's inherent attributes induced former SecDef Donald Rumsfeld and President George W. Bush to assign USSOCOM as the "lead Combatant Commander for planning, synchronizing, and as directed, executing

global operations against terrorist networks in coordination with other Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCC).”<sup>22</sup>

In 2004, facing the worldwide terrorist threat and recognizing the kind of operations required to combat this irregular conflict, President Bush gave USSOCOM unprecedented authority to control what had traditionally been within the GCC’s purview. This authority, contained in the 2004 Unified Command Plan (UCP), clearly articulated the President’s decision to designate USSOCOM as the lead combatant command for the GWOT. As USSOCOM developed a campaign plan for the GWOT, several Combatant Commanders and interagency elements expressed concern that USSOCOM would encroach on their responsibilities. This concern was resolved at the SecDef level when Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England told the Combatant Commanders that DoD would use USSOCOM’s campaign plan as a guide to resource the combatant commands’ GWOT programs. This meant that Combatant Commanders had to integrate their plans with USSOCOM.<sup>23</sup> These actions by the country’s highest level civilian leadership are significant because they are explicit recognition that the current conflict is one for which USSOCOM is best suited to wage through its global perspective, reach, and unique warfighting capabilities.

### **The Marine Corps- USSOCOM Relationship in the Beginning**

In the late 1980s, as USSOCOM was legislatively formed and the Army, Navy, and Air Force parted with their SOF units, the Marine Corps opted out of providing forces for a number of reasons. General P.X. Kelley, the Marine Corps’ Commandant at the time, believed that committing forces to the newly formed USSOCOM was not in the Corps’ best interest because it would reduce the Corps’ flexibility to conduct missions as a general purpose force. Congress

and DoD focused on the Corps Force Reconnaissance assets as a capability that would meet the criteria as a suitable contribution to USSOCOM. General Kelley successfully argued for retaining all Marine forces including Force Reconnaissance, stating that Force Reconnaissance was a critical part of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF). Additionally, it was argued that the Marine's contribution to USSOCOM would not be significantly different from what the Army or Navy SOF forces were providing, thereby creating an unnecessary duplication of effort. Congress agreed with these explanations and allowed the Corps to forego providing forces to USSOCOM.<sup>24</sup>

General Kelley did recognize, however, the changing priorities within the DoD. Congress mandated that DoD increase its focus on LIC, so General Kelley tasked the Commanding General of Fleet Marine Forces Atlantic with increasing the special operations capability of the Marine Corps. This resulted in the creation of the Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) or "MEU SOC" in 1987. One of the centerpieces of the MEU SOC was the Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF). This organization was made up of a command element, a direct action platoon of specially trained Force Reconnaissance Marines, and a specially trained infantry platoon to serve as "trailers" supporting the direct action platoon by providing security and additional firepower. The Air Combat Element (ACE) typically provided a core group of helicopters and pilots to the MSPF in order to establish the habitual relationships required to execute "special operations." The MSPF was one of the elements of the MEU SOC that enabled the Marine Corps to respond to hostage situations, terrorists, gas and oil platform takeovers, or other irregular warfare crisis situations. With a MEU SOC forward deployed and able to respond faster than a USSOCOM force flying from the United States, Congress was

convinced that this was a complementary arrangement and not a redundant capability in the U.S. arsenal.

Throughout the 1990s, however, SOF forces were increasingly able to respond to worldwide crisis relegating the MSPF and the MEU combat forces to a show of force mission or other relatively benign operations. For example, in 1993, during UNOSOM II, the 24<sup>th</sup> MEU SOC conducted an MSPF raid to capture Somali warlord Mohamed Farrah Aideed. Although flawlessly executed, Aideed was not captured, and the MEU was explicitly told by Central Command (CENTCOM) not to conduct such offensive operations.<sup>25</sup> CENTCOM made it clear that targets of such strategic importance would be pursued only by America's most elite special operations units. Soon after this event, Task Force Ranger (consisting of SOF) arrived in Somalia and began targeting Aideed on a regular basis. The MSPF became, in effect, an organization destined to not be employed. However, if certain elements of the MSPF had been provided to USSOCOM instead of the MEU, it can be deduced that these Marines would have been employed extensively, benefiting the Marine Corps, USSOCOM, and the Nation. This deduction can be made because from 1993 to 1999, SOF personnel deployments rose 253 percent and the number of SOF operations increased 57 percent.<sup>26</sup> As theater commanders grew to better understand SOF capabilities, SOF units became their force of choice.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the perceived reduced flexibility that providing Marines to USSOCOM would cause, a number of other factors led to the Marine Corps' reluctance to contribute to the newly formed command. General Kelley, like the other Service Chiefs, believed that Congress was infringing on the traditional responsibilities of the Services in an effort to embrace "jointness." The Nunn-Cohen Amendment establishing USSOCOM was viewed as an even greater

infringement on the Service tasks of “organizing, training, and equipping” forces because the Amendment was taking the unprecedented step of legislating the creation of a Unified Command and dictating what forces would be assigned to that command.<sup>28</sup> Today, however, DoD endorses joint warfare as the overriding doctrine for all U.S. force employment. The United States has benefited greatly from the establishment of USSOCOM, as SOF organization, funding, training, and attention have increased, creating a world class capability that did not exist prior to 1987. Certainly the Services lost control over a formerly neglected segment of the force by contributing forces to USSOCOM, but the benefit to the country is undisputed.

At USSOCOM’s inception many within the Marine Corps continued to argue that the Corps should avoid providing forces to the fledgling USSOCOM because it was an organization destined to fail.<sup>29</sup> Several factors pointed to this possibility: (1) DoD did not support the legislative reform and there was potential that USSOCOM would be under resourced as a result of that lack of support; (2) SOF had a mixed record of success to this point with failures and missteps in Operations Eagle Claw and Urgent Fury; (3) Compared to the potential of major conventional war with the Soviets, low intensity conflict was considered by the Marine Corps to be less important.<sup>30</sup> These reasons for not providing forces have been rendered invalid as USSOCOM has emerged as the premier SOF organization in the world and the risk of major conventional war has waned.

There was also a significant cultural reluctance on the part of the Corps to embrace a reorganization of the Services that resulted in the creation of an elite organization. The primary resentment of SOF by many members of the Marine Corps centers around one of SOF’s core values- high quality personnel. If, in fact, SOF are men of the highest quality, by definition that

implies that general-purpose military personnel and Marines are not. Other concerns are not surprising. Any funds that go to support SOF are perceived as monies that are not available to the Marine Corps. Since SOF do not contribute directly to the Corps' missions, funds that go to SOF are not available for Marine Corps mission achievement. This logic is weak, though, because USSOCOM represents only about 1.5 percent of the total Department of Defense budget.<sup>31</sup> However, the perception that SOF takes away considerable money, resources, key personnel, and missions, is a powerful source of resentment among the general-purpose forces.<sup>32</sup>

In the latter years of the Cold War many Marines posited that the capabilities of SOF were not as dramatically different from the Marine Corps as they have become today. The Marines contended that its forces were as capable in many areas, and more capable in certain areas, than those forces being deemed "special." However, a substantial gap developed between SOF and Marine Corps capabilities throughout the 1990s and early twenty-first century. The Marine Corps could not keep up with SOF equipment, recruiting, and training enhancements enabled through the establishment of MPF-11. As SOF gained in capability, the natural preference among GCCs was to utilize the most capable force, resulting in the selection of SOF for missions that could have been executed by forward deployed Marines (like Operation Earnest Will, and pursuing Aideed in Somalia).<sup>33</sup>

Because SOF have become the force of choice for U.S. operations around the world, it can be easily argued that the Marine Corps erred by not contributing forces to USSOCOM. This reality was one of several factors that pushed the Marine Corps into providing a permanent, committed force contribution to USSOCOM following the commencement of the GWOT.

## **Marine Corps Finally Provides Forces to USSOCOM**

The events of 9/11, the resulting GWOT and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) solidified the realities of the current face of warfare. The success of USSOCOM in executing significant missions in Afghanistan validated to DoD leadership and politicians the value of SOF forces in combating terrorism at relatively low cost in resources and personnel. For example, the Taliban regime was overthrown by the Northern Alliance with the aid of just two hundred U.S. SOF personnel.<sup>34</sup> SOF also shattered the Al Qaeda base of operations in Afghanistan and captured or killed dozens of Al Qaeda personalities like Mohammed Atef, Mohammed Salah, and Anas al-Liby.<sup>35</sup> These successes alerted the Marine Corps that SOF would continue to take a lead role in the GWOT.

Three main factors contributed to the Marine Corps ultimately providing forces to USSOCOM. First was the realization that in order to stay relevant, the Corps had to adapt to and aggressively embrace IW.<sup>36</sup> Observing the shift in DoD focus toward special operations, the Marine Corps recognized that it needed to integrate with USSOCOM or else it would continue to suffer in the areas of fiscal resourcing, interoperability, technology, career growth, recruiting, and protection of roles and missions.<sup>37</sup> Second, with USSOCOM's expanded role as lead agency for synchronizing and executing the GWOT, it needed more forces. The Marine Corps was an obvious choice to provide those forces with "on the shelf" capabilities and personnel that could be readily developed into SOF rather than attempting to recruit more soldiers, sailors, or civilians. Third, and most importantly, in 2005 SecDef Rumsfeld ordered the Marine Corps to provide permanent, dedicated forces to USSOCOM in the interest of the country.<sup>38</sup>

## **Marine Corps Decision to Contribute Forces after 19 Years**

In 2001, the Marine Corps' contribution to USSOCOM totaled 105 Marines in various staff positions.<sup>39</sup> There was also a Marine Corps-USSOCOM board held annually to help ensure interoperability between Marine and SOF forces. However, when Operation Enduring Freedom's ground operations commenced on 19 October 2001, Marine forces were not involved. It was not until 25 November, over one month later, that Marines entered Afghanistan. Much attention has been given to the Marine Corps entrance to Afghanistan, but the objective the Corps' Task Force 58 was assigned to "seize" was USSOCOM's 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment's "Objective Rhino" from the previous month.<sup>40</sup> Task Force 58's "Camp Rhino" became a forward operating base for forces in southern Afghanistan, but enemy contact was light. TF 58's ground combat element engaged Taliban forces only one time. By January 2002, the Marine Corps had completely withdrawn from Afghanistan.

The Marine Corps leadership was shaken by the Corps lack of participation in the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom. Central Command's (CENTCOM) leadership, including the Theater Special Operations Component (TSOC), seemed unwilling to use MAGTFs except in a piecemeal fashion. Missions like the Ranger's seizure of Objective Rhino, a desert airstrip, were exactly what the MEU SOC trained for. Instead of using the readily available MEU, however, CENTCOM leadership instead moved a Ranger Battalion from the U.S. to execute the mission, carried out to demonstrate to the Taliban that U.S. forces could assault into Taliban strongholds.<sup>41</sup> Individual MAGTF capabilities were well received, but the MAGTF as a whole was not leveraged. During Operation Anaconda, two entire MEUs with twelve reconnaissance teams and two battalion landing teams, remained off the coast of Afghanistan and Pakistan as

Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives escaped out of the Sha-i-kot Valley because conventional army and SOF forces were stretched too thin in an effort to keep the conventional force footprint small. Secretary Rumsfeld and CENTCOM Commander General Franks wanted to avoid a large buildup of conventional forces, similar to the Soviet buildup of the 1980s, in an effort to avoid looking like an occupying force.<sup>42</sup> Because of the intense political environment surrounding the invasion of Afghanistan, this was a reasonable assertion by the defense leadership, and further solidified the desire to maximize the use of SOF to conduct the nation's current war.

Not only were Marine forces minimally employed, but SOF units considered utilizing MEU amphibious platforms as staging bases for SOF forces. On 2 March 2002, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Arabian Peninsula (CJSOTF-AP) landed on the 13<sup>th</sup> MEU's command ship USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD-6) to conduct planning for the MEU's offload into Kuwait in order to make space for a SOF task force made up of Rangers, Army Special Forces, and Air Force SOF helicopters. Indeed, General Tommy Franks, Commander of CENTCOM in 2002, discussed a similar proposition in his autobiography American Soldier. Franks discusses the planning considerations for inserting US forces into landlocked Afghanistan stating:

As I studied the map on the projector screen, a plan took shape. Afghanistan might be landlocked, but many Taliban and al Qaeda installations lay within range of a ship-borne helicopter force flying from the Northern Arabian Sea. The MH-53 Pave Lows and MH-60 Direct Action Penetrators of the 160<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Aviation Regiment needed a relatively large base, with room for the big choppers as well as adequate maintenance and ordnance facilities. I needed a steel lily pad-a Forward Operating Base-just off the coast of Pakistan, and I needed it soon. In the mid-1990s, the Navy had developed the capacity to transform fleet aircraft carriers into floating SOF bases. The USS America had carried more than 2000 special operators and their helicopters during military operations in Haiti in 1994. If we could not secure bases in Pakistan, we would need a carrier to serve as the floating base for our SOF mission in the south. Two weeks later, having sailed halfway around the world at flank speed, the USS Kitty Hawk

would arrive in the northern Arabian Sea, just south of the Strait of Hormuz. We would have our "lily pad" in place.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout Franks' book there is a clear desire to use SOF forces and avoid the buildup and use of conventional units in Afghanistan. Franks' vision of the war in Afghanistan was "airborne and helicopter borne night assaults by small, lethal, and unpredictable units coupled with unprecedented precision."<sup>44</sup>

Although company sized night raids are well within the MEU's capability set, the superior training, technology, equipment, and the inherent attributes of SOF personnel persuaded the GCC to utilize SOF in order increase the likelihood of success and reduce the risk of executing the missions.<sup>45</sup> The Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) that executed the initial raids from the USS Kitty Hawk conducted risky low level flight and night aerial refueling with the MH-47 helicopters that carried the raid force deep into Afghanistan in an attempt to capture Taliban leader Mullah Omar. The raid force was supported by pre-assault fires delivered by AC-130 gunships with advanced optics and weaponry that added significant precision firepower to the force.<sup>46</sup>

The MEUs floating in the Northern Arabian Sea had similar capabilities as the SOTF on the Kitty Hawk.<sup>47</sup> For example, although the MEU did not possess AC-130 gunships, it did possess AV-8B Harriers that could have supported a raid force. In fact, the 15<sup>th</sup> MEU planned and rehearsed a number of raids with similar profiles as the SOF raids that occurred on 19-20 October 2001.<sup>48</sup> The MEU, however, was never even considered for these initial operations.<sup>49</sup> The national leadership, understandably, elected to utilize the country's most capable forces as the initial strike force in the GWOT. These initial raids were similar in many ways to the Eagle Claw mission of 1980 and were exactly the mission that SOF trained and prepared to execute.

Another development that shocked Marine leadership was the Navy's vision of the Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) as a replacement for the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG), the group of troop carrying ships that exist to deliver MEUs to combat. On 8 February, 2002, the Chief of Naval Operations stated in a briefing to the SecDef that the ESG would be a "transformational force package allowing special operations from non-traditional platforms."<sup>50</sup> Navy planners from the "Deep Blue" Strategic Planning Group, made up of senior naval officers, briefed that the ESG added to the ARG three surface warfare ships, a P-3C Orion Aircraft, and a submarine to provide increased operational agility and offensive capability, improved force defense, and "expanded special warfare basing, delivery, and entry."<sup>51</sup> Deep Blue further noted that a variety of advanced force staging base (AFSB) options were being considered. Some of these options included reactivating decommissioned aircraft carriers or leasing a commercial platform to host SOF troops and their helicopters. The Navy expressed interest in finding additional ways for SOF capabilities to be linked with regular Navy functions. "We are looking at a variety of interesting things that SOF forces have, some of their advanced technologies, to marry these up with Navy capabilities," a Navy official said. "SOF is a big part of what we are doing."<sup>52</sup>

With these recent events in mind and the Navy's aggressive work to expand and promote their relationship with SOF, Marine leaders predicted an expansion of SOF forces aboard naval shipping at the expense of Marine forces being deployed aboard or matched against a limited number of amphibious platforms. It became plausible that, in order to make room for SOF, MAGTFs would become smaller and, therefore, less capable, less relevant, and less used.<sup>53</sup>

In October 2002, the Marine Corps finalized a plan to provide a 90 man detachment as an initial proof of concept to serve as the foundation for future force contributions to USSOCOM. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between USSOCOM and the Marine Corps was signed on 20 February 2003 and established the initial force contribution. The unit was called Marine Corps Special Operations Command Detachment One (MCSOCOM Det One). Det One deployed to OIF II in April 2004 with a Navy SEAL Squadron and served subordinate to the Navy Commander in charge of the squadron. The unit and deployment were judged a success in studies by both Joint Special Operations University and The Center for Naval Analysis. This set the stage for a more significant force contribution to USSOCOM.

### **USSOCOM needs Additional Forces**

The September 11 terrorist attacks, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the GWOT presented enormous challenges and placed heavy demands on USSOCOM and its SOF.<sup>54</sup> Each Combatant Commander requested more SOF, forcing USSOCOM to find new ways to manage competing demands on the overall force. In May 2003 Marshall Billingslea, the Principal Assistant Secretary of Defense for LIC, stated that "USSOCOM is not structured to meet the growing demands of the war on terrorism."<sup>55</sup> Army Lieutenant General Doug Brown, the Deputy Commander of USSOCOM in 2003, stated that "SOF cannot be mass produced on short notice. The worst thing that we can do right now is try to add a bunch of people. We have a thoughtful system that has proven itself. We need to increase our recruiting and the troops."<sup>56</sup>

Another problem USSOCOM faced was the flight of SOF operators to Private Security Companies (PSC) that pay significantly more money and offer a lower operational tempo and fewer deployments than the military. Some PSCs were paying employees \$12,000 to \$13,000

dollars a month to deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan. USSOCOM acknowledged that it was losing significant numbers of senior personnel to PSCs. In December 2003, USSOCOM launched a study to determine how to stem the loss of these highly qualified personnel. Incentive pay increased SOF operator pay by up to \$750 dollars a month, but this had a minimal impact on SOF operator retention.<sup>57</sup> There is no practical way for the military to compete with PSC salaries and deployment flexibility and, consequently, the drain of SOF personnel to PSCs continues today.

USSOCOM's inability to maintain adequate levels of SOF hindered DoD's ability to conduct the operations that it envisioned executing to wage the GWOT. This led SecDef Rumsfeld to intervene by taking a pragmatic step that had been resisted since 1987.

### **Secretary of Defense Mandates Change**

In late 2001 and early 2002 the Marine Corps was increasingly marginalized in the GWOT and was clearly no longer the force of choice for the critical missions being executed at the time. The Marine Commandant General James L. Jones recognized the importance of the Marine Corps contributing forces to USSOCOM and establishing a Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) in the interest of the Marine Corps and the country.<sup>58</sup> USSOCOM was taking on an increasing role in the GWOT and was widely recognized, according to former Army Chief of Staff, General Peter Schoomaker, as the "logical military response because of its array of options, strategic economy of force, and tailor-to-task capabilities."<sup>59</sup>

General Jones acted decisively by accelerating the process of contributing forces to USSOCOM with the creation of the 90 man MCSOCOM Detachment One that deployed

subordinate to JSOTF-Arabian Peninsula and Naval Special Warfare Squadron One. Despite MCSOCOM Det One's success, General Jones' 2003 successor, General Hagee, was not as enthusiastic about a Marine force contribution to USSOCOM and halted the process of developing a more significant and sizable contribution. This hesitation was likely due to current force commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan that complicated the establishment of a new unit and encouraged the perception that the Marine Corps was no longer being marginalized.<sup>60</sup> General Hagee's reluctance was also likely due to the same parochialism that compelled Commandant Kelley to not contribute forces in 1987. General Hagee referred to the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan the same way General Kelley cited the Soviet threat and loss of flexibility as justification not to provide forces.<sup>61</sup> This time, however, the SecDef would not submit to the Marine Corps obstructionism and shortsightedness.

Following Det One's successful 2004 deployment, Marine planners reconvened to collaborate on a recommendation for a Marine Corps contribution to USSOCOM. In early 2005, General Hagee and USSOCOM Commander General Brown proposed to Secretary Rumsfeld an increase in Marine Officers on the USSOCOM staff and specialized Marine Unit assignment to USSOCOM on an "as needed" basis.<sup>62</sup> General Hagee made no offer of permanent force assignment as had been envisioned by General Jones. Rumsfeld stated heatedly that this proposal did not go far enough toward incorporating the Marine Corps into USSOCOM and he told the Generals to go back and work something out until they had a suitable sized permanent force contribution.<sup>63</sup> On October 28, 2005, General Hagee and General Brown finally arrived at a solution acceptable to the SecDef. The product was a Marine Component of USSOCOM, Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC), consisting of about 2500 Marines. This

initial contribution eased the pressure from SecDef Rumsfeld but, as will be discussed in the next section, has proven inadequate to meet USSOCOM's requirements.

### **MARSOC Today- High Demand/ (Too) Low Density**

MARSOC's table of organization consists of 2516 Marines from a variety of military operational specialties (MOS). It is led by a Major General and has five subordinate units (appendix A). The Marine Special Operations Company (MSOC) is the operational unit for MARSOC deployments (appendix B). Of the nearly 2300 Marines currently recruited into MARSOC, only 756 operators are deployable to support TSOC missions around the globe. The remaining personnel fill staff and administrative positions to support the operators.<sup>64</sup>

In September 2007 the Government Accounting Office (GAO) released a report titled "Management Actions Are Needed to Effectively Integrate Marine Corps Forces into the U.S. Special Operations Command." The GAO report showed that MARSOC is under resourced and under manned to meet its global commitments:

While the Marine Corps has made progress in establishing its special operations command (Command), the Command has not yet fully identified the force structure needed to perform its assigned missions. DoD developed initial force structure plans to establish the Command; however, it did not use critical practices of strategic planning, such as the alignment of activities and resources and the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes when developing these plans. As a result of limitations in the strategic planning process, the Command has identified several force structure challenges that will likely affect the Command's ability to perform its full range of responsibilities, and is working to revise its force structure.<sup>65</sup>

The report noted that when creating MARSOC the Marine Corps based the size of the command on the units currently capable of conducting SOF missions and not on an analysis of the command's mission requirements. As a baseline, the Marine Corps took its east and west coast Force Reconnaissance Units and turned them into MSOBs. Additionally, according to the GAO

report, there were not enough support personnel to support the warfighters and there were not enough warfighter units to accomplish all of the unit's mission requirements. The report discussed MARSOCs attempts to rectify the personnel shortage by working with Marine Corps Headquarters (HQMC) to increase force structure to meet the realities of the commands requirements.<sup>66</sup>

Because of the institutional bias the Marine Corps still maintains toward SOF, and its reluctance to part with its most highly trained Marines, HQMC has not increased MARSOCs manning and as a result, MARSOC Marines are being stretched with increasing operational tempo, as the rest of the force enjoys a decrease in operational tempo due to the reduction of forces in Iraq.<sup>67</sup> This increase in MARSOC operational tempo will continue as conventional forces are inevitably removed from Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>68</sup>

Additionally, the policy requiring Marines to rotate out of MARSOC every five years should be reconsidered. This policy is meant to benefit the Marine Corps by bringing highly trained MARSOC Marines back into the general purpose Corps, and therefore keep the Marine competitive for promotion by preventing a lack of diversification. Marine leadership acknowledges that Marines that are too specialized do not get promoted at the same rate as "well rounded" Marines with a varied background.<sup>69</sup> This policy will hurt MARSOC by stripping away highly trained Marines and is evidence that the Marine Corps leadership and promotion system does not appreciate the level of training and specialization required to maintain a competent special operator. The Army and Navy have created separate career fields for their SOF. The Marine Corps should do the same.

In 2006 and 2007, MSOCs deployed with MEUs from both the 2<sup>nd</sup> MSOB (Camp Lejeune) and 1<sup>st</sup> MSOB (Camp Pendleton). These deployments were successful in establishing

relationships between MARSOC and both Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOC) and MEUs. The TSOCs have Operational Control over the MSOC and have the option of employing the MSOC in support of TSOC needs, or the TSOC can leave the MSOC with the MEU for possible contingency operations as directed by the GCC (Appendix C). Understandably, the TSOCs have, in every circumstance, taken control of the MSOC and employed them in support of TSOC missions. There is an over abundance of work and too few SOF forces to do it. The framework has been established, however, for the Marine/Navy/USSOCOM vision of amphibious SOF.<sup>70</sup> This vision can only be realized with an increase in MARSOC manning.

### **Manpower Issues**

Various issues regarding the Marine Corps support for USSOCOM that cause consternation among Marine Corps leadership have been addressed throughout this paper. As each argument is countered, opponents are reduced to the same point that General Hagee expressed to Secretary Rumsfeld. It is argued that operational tempo is too high and mandated responsibilities cannot be met with the addition of new units such as MARSOC that pull resources and personnel from the general purpose Marine Corps without adding structure. While it is certainly true that operational tempo is relatively high, this is the same short sighted approach that was taken in 1987 when the Marine Corps failed to embrace USSOCOM. Interestingly, the Marine Corps was able to assemble MARSOC despite the Commandant's 2005 concerns that it would be too difficult to do with Marines engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan. MARSOC is now a highly sought after success making substantial contributions to the GWOT.

The current 2500 man MARSOC should be doubled in size in order to bring the Marine Corps SOF numbers to roughly the same percentage as the other service SOF contributions (see endnote 4). This will allow MARSOC to fully develop its capabilities while managing

operational tempo and personnel rotation. The greatest obstacle is Marine leadership's lack of willingness.

### **Conclusion**

Marine Corps Vision 2025 discusses the Corps plan for a continuation of a persistent forward presence ready to respond to crises and increased cooperation with the use of constantly rotating Security Cooperation MAGTFs. This is similar to what the MEUs did throughout the 1990s. While there were certainly events that required the use of the MEU, the true "crisis" situations were almost always delegated to SOF forces. This paper has provided numerous examples and indications from the nation's leadership that this trend will continue and become more profound. It makes sense to use the most elite forces in order to reduce risk, a constant goal for GCC and politician alike. The Marine Corps must recognize this trend and fully commit to MARSOC to avoid being left out of active combat theaters and relegated to missions that are of less strategic and operational importance. This waste of Marine Corps talent is not in the best interest of the nation.

Joining USSOCOM nearly 20 years after its inception, the Marine Corps is learning the lessons the other services learned in the late 1980s when the SOF community began exerting influence over its assigned forces. The Marine Corps needs to embrace this and recognize that USSOCOM is the force of choice for the new age of warfare. This is how the Marine Corps will provide the most value to the country in the age of irregular SOF focused warfare.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Irregular warfare is defined in the Multi-Service Concept for Irregular Warfare as: A form of warfare that has as its objective the credibility and/or the legitimacy of the relevant political authority with the goal of undermining or supporting that authority. Irregular warfare favors indirect approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capabilities to seek asymmetric advantages, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will. Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, VA, and Headquarters US Special Operations Command, MacDill AFB, Tampa, FL, (August 2006), 7.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *2006 Quadrennial Defense Review*, (Arlington, VA: Department of Defense: 2006) 13.

<sup>3</sup> This recognition led to the creation of the Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), a general purpose force with the "capability" to conduct special operations against the irregular threat.

<sup>4</sup> US Navy Special Warfare (SEALs) are 1.8 percent of the Navy. Army SOF is 2.5 percent of the Army. Air Force SOF makes up 4 percent of the Air Force. Joint Special Operations University presentation by Major Mark Raney for USSOCOM elective (lecture, MCU, Quantico VA, 17 Feb 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Stew Magnuson, "Marine Special Operators Set out to Prove Themselves." *National Defense Magazine*. February 2009.  
<http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/ARCHIVE/2009/FEBRUARY/Pages/MarineSpecialOperatorsSetOuttoProveThemselves.aspx> (Accessed 15 March 2009)

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *2008 National Defense Strategy*, Arlington, VA: Department of Defense, 2008, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Paul L. Hastert, "Operation Anaconda-Perception Meets Reality in the Hills of Afghanistan," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28, (2005):12.

<sup>8</sup> Tom Curry, "Clinton versus Obama, Is there any difference?," MSNBC.COM, November 29 2006, -  
<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15920730/> "One useful dividing line between the two candidates, say some Democrats, is the Iraq war." (Accessed 15 March 2009)

<sup>9</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* (December 2006), 1-1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., IX.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., IX.

<sup>12</sup> Tim Dyhouse, "Marines Add Special Ops Unit," *VFW Magazine* 93, no. 5 (Feb 2006): 13 - Quote from LtGen Jan Huly, PP&O.

<sup>13</sup> Sue Lackey, "The SOCOM Dilemma," *Sea Power* 48, (April 2005): 30.

<sup>14</sup> United States Special Operations Command, *20 Year History* (MacDill AFB, FL, 2007), 5-6.

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<sup>15</sup> Susan Marquis. *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces* (Washington DC, Brookings Institution 1997), 4.

<sup>16</sup> United States Special Operations Command. *USSOCOM Fact Sheet, 2007*. (MacDill AFB, FL, 2007), 4.

<sup>17</sup> An example of this adaptive acquisition capability was USSOCOM's acquisition of vehicles capable of surviving IED strikes during Operation Iraqi Freedom I and II. As conventional U.S. forces were suffering significant casualties from IED strikes while operating in unarmored HMMWVs, the DoD, the Army, and the Marine Corps deliberated over how to best counter the IED threat, eventually delivering "Up Armored" HMMWVs<sup>17</sup> followed by Electronic Counter Measures (ECM), and finally, fielding the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle (MRAP). However, thousands of casualties were incurred during the two plus years it took to decide on an approach to counter the IED threat and then outfit the force. During this time period support for the Iraq war effort significantly declined due to an increase in U.S. casualties, according to PEW research polls.

USSOCOM forces, on the other hand, purchased IED resistant "Pandur" armored vehicles off-the-shelf from South Africa, and procured experimental, yet effective, ECM devices as soon as the IED threat was recognized. SOCOM's use of a South African company displayed the institutional adaptability and comprehension of the battlefield environment to realize that South Africa had expertise in this area from having dealt with a mine/IED threat for many years during the Border War with Angola. USSOCOM's acquisition and implementation of the IED-resistant vehicles and ECM capability well over a year before conventional forces began procurement of these life-saving capabilities is further evidence of the successful application of the budget and acquisition authority flexibility given to USSOCOM and SOF elements. This is a critical point because, as discussed earlier, the ability to succeed in IW depends on maintaining the nation's will. The enemy seeks to undermine this will by inflicting casualties. USSOCOM has proven that its forces are better able to rapidly adapt to the changing combat environment, thus incurring fewer casualties. Such performance further reinforces the U.S. leadership's view that employing SOF is the most efficient and least risky use of military force.

<sup>18</sup> USSOCOM Fact Sheet 2007 pg 3. USSOCOM's components are the US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM), Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), and MARSOC. The Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) is a USSOCOM sub-unified command.

<sup>19</sup> USSOCOM website-click on "About USSOCOM then open "Force Posture 2008" word document.  
[http://www.socom.mil/Docs/2008\\_Posture\\_Statement.doc](http://www.socom.mil/Docs/2008_Posture_Statement.doc) (Accessed 23 December, 2008)

<sup>20</sup> David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, *United States Special Operations Forces* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2007), 218-219.

<sup>21</sup> USSOCOM, *Fact Sheet 2007*. These missions are: Counter proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Counterterrorism (CT), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Direct Action (DA), Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), Civil Affairs (CA), Unconventional Warfare (UW), and Information Operations (IO).

<sup>22</sup> SOF's inherent attributes go beyond the scope of this paper but are summarized in Robert Spulak's *Theory of Special Operations* (JSOU Press, Hurlburt Field, Florida, 2007), 38-39. "Special Operations are missions to accomplish strategic objectives where the use of conventional forces would create unacceptable risks. Overcoming these risks requires special operations forces that directly address the ultimate sources of friction. SOF overcome risks through qualities that are the result of the attributes of SOF personnel. The distribution of attributes for SOF personnel are different than the distributions for the military. In SOF distributions, the average

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performance is much higher and the spread smaller because there is a minimum standard against which these personnel were selected. "

<sup>23</sup> USSOCOM, *20 year History*, 17.

<sup>24</sup> Giles Kyser. "Fix Recon, USSOCOM, and the Future of the Corps." *Marine Corps Gazette* 87, no. 7, (July 2004): 19.

<sup>25</sup> George Fenton, "Marine Expeditionary Units, the Operational Level of MOOTW." *Marine Corps Gazette* 80, no. 3. (March 1996): 58.

<sup>26</sup> The Special Operations Warrior Foundation, General Peter Schoomaker, *US Special Operations Forces*, (The Special Operations Warrior Foundation, Tampa, Florida, 2003): 19.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Kyser, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>31</sup> USSOCOM: *Capstone Concept for Special Operations*, (2006). [http://www.dtic.mil/futurejointwarfare/strategic/USSOCOM\\_CCISO\\_2006.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/futurejointwarfare/strategic/USSOCOM_CCISO_2006.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Jessica Glick Turnley, *Retaining a Precarious Value as Special Operations Go Mainstream* (Hurlburt Field, Florida: JSOU Press, 2008), 18.

<sup>33</sup> The Special Operations Warrior Foundation *US Special Operations Forces*, (The Special Operations Warrior Foundation, Tampa, Florida, 2003): 142. During hostilities with Iran in 1988 the U.S. executed Operation Earnest Will. Navy Seals using shallow draft boats and Army MH-6 Little Bird helicopters conducted maritime raids and oil tanker sea lane protection deemed "unsuitable" for Marine and Navy general purpose forces.

<sup>34</sup> Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York: Regan Books, 2004), 271.

<sup>35</sup> USA Today, "Al Qaeda's Most Wanted, the Dead, the Captured, the At Large". *USA Today*, March 2, 2003. [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2003-03-02-alqaeda-list\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2003-03-02-alqaeda-list_x.htm) (accessed 23 Dec 2003).

<sup>36</sup> In addition to providing forces to USSOCOM, the Marine Corps established "Mojave Viper" to replace CAX. Mojave Viper focused on COIN and IW whereas CAX only focused on high intensity conventional combat.

<sup>37</sup> Christian Lowe. "Spec Ops Marines." *Armed Forces Journal* (December, 2005) <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2005/12/> (Accessed 4 April 2009).

"We've been working with SOCom ^... on coming up with ideas on how the Marine Corps could better support" the command, said Lt. Gen. Jan Huly, head of plans, policies and operations at Marine headquarters. "We finally came to the realization that unless we were a full partner in U.S. Special Operations Command, we probably weren't making maximum use of the Marine Corps' capabilities." For nearly 20 years, however, the Corps has remained outside the spec ops world, working hard to avoid creating an elite cadre within a force that considers

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itself already elite. But times have changed, Huly countered, and the Corps has grown up. "I think we're past that," he said. "It's been a maturation and a growing and a developmental process. The time is now right. "This is a way in which we're going to continue to do business in the future," he added.

Protection of roles and missions was threatened as SOF forces became worldwide deployable overnight through the use of strategic airlift. Additionally, US Naval vessels carrying SOF to Haiti and then for the initial invasion of Afghanistan encroached on the Marine Corps historical role of being "soldiers from the sea."

<sup>38</sup> David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, 182-184. Some argue that SecDef Rumsfeld's interest in "Transformation" was a consideration for pushing the Marine Corps to contribute to USSOCOM. Transformation has various definitions, generally meaning a change in the military's massive arsenal to a lighter, more efficient force, designed to fight mobile, high-tech wars with fewer troops. Arthur Cebrowski, a leading transformation advocate and theorist in the Bush Administration's Pentagon, described an aspect of transformation in this way: "In this age of strategic uncertainty, risk is managed by increasing the breadth of capabilities, no matter the imperfections, even as the expense of highly effective capabilities bought in quantity. The real issue is not how much is enough, but do we have the breath of capabilities necessary to address strategic gaps." SOF specifically addresses this approach to warfare, and it could be reasoned that Rumsfeld viewed SOF as an already transformed entity.

<sup>39</sup> Kyser, 20.

<sup>40</sup> Gazette articles and Masters Theses are just a sampling of the literature that has touted TF-58's power projection into Afghanistan. The term typically used to describe Task Force 58's tactical task was a "Seizure" of FOB Rhino. In actuality, TF-58 merely "Occupied" the ground.

<sup>41</sup> USSOCOM, *20 Year History*, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Franks, 271.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>45</sup> Mir Baslamnyarr. *Shadow Warriors. A History of the US Army Rangers*. (New York: Osprey Pub, 1995): 175-180. The SOF forces used for two airborne (parachute) night raids to secure airfields in Afghanistan were US Army Rangers. They utilized Air Force SOF Combat Talon MC-130 aircraft launched out of Pakistan. AC-130 Gunships and B2 Stealth Bombers delivered ordnance onto the objective prior to the Ranger's airborne insertion. Due to these pre-assault fires, there was no resistance met on the objective.

Ranger units are equipped with the most state-of-the-art equipment. In 2001-2002, for example, every Ranger went into combat with his own set of PVS-14 Night Vision Goggles and PEQ-2 laser designators and bullet proof ballistic plated body armor. Marines on MEUs in 2001-2002 possessed a mix of PVS-7 and PVS-14, and had enough sets to outfit about 50% of the line infantrymen. The Marines had no ballistic plates for their Kevlar flak vests.

<sup>46</sup> USSOCOM, *20 Year History*, 89-90.

<sup>47</sup> MEU CH-53s can conduct aerial refueling with 2 of the 4 Marine MC-130s that support the MEU.

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<sup>48</sup> Major Phil Treglia, interview with author, 4 April 2009. Major Treglia, the Force Reconnaissance Platoon Commander for the 15th MEU (SOC) discussed the planning and rehearsals conducted throughout October 2001 by the 15<sup>th</sup> MEU's MSPF.

<sup>49</sup> David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, 5, 235. "Immediately after September 11, instead of getting in to parochial arguments, things like "Well we've got a MEUSOC, why not send them? It never got to that. There was never any of that discussion. It was a special ops mission. So, it was the civilian leadership that pushed for a special operations capability and wanted special operations involvement in the War on Terrorism." "Marines could not conduct a SOF mission because they lack the selection, training, equipment, and experiential base to conduct special operations."

<sup>50</sup> Kyser, 19.

<sup>51</sup> Hunter Keeter, "Navy 'Deep Blue' Operations Group Supports War Against Terrorism", *Defense Daily International*, (14 Feb 2002): 1.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Kyser, 20.

<sup>54</sup> USSOCOM, *20 Year History*, 26.

<sup>55</sup> Roxana Tiron, "Demand for Special Ops Forces Outpaces Supply." *National Defense* 87, no. 594. (May 2003): 18

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Christopher Spearin, "Special Operations Forces a Strategic Resource: Public and Private Divides." *Parameters*. (Winter 2006/2007): 65.

<sup>58</sup> Lackey, 30.

<sup>59</sup> Spearin, 58.

<sup>60</sup> Lackey, 30. There is no documentation that specifically addresses why Donald Rumsfeld sent General Hagee and General Brown away to "come up with a suitable Marine contribution," but it is clear that Hagee was reluctant to assign forces to USSOCOM until ordered to by Rumsfeld.

<sup>61</sup> Harold Kennedy, *U.S. Marines Closing Ranks with Special Operations*. *National Defense* 87, no. 591 (Feb, 2003): 42. "Our highly trained, cost-effective, first-on-the-scene forces provide a much-needed special operations capability that is complementary, not redundant, to the mission of our nation's special operations forces," Marine Commandant Gen. Michael W. Hagee told a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.

<sup>62</sup> Lackey, 30.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Joint Special Operations University presentation by Major Mark Raney for USSOCOM elective (lecture, MCU, Quantico VA 17 Feb 2009).

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<sup>65</sup> GAO Report to Congressional Committees. *Management Actions Are Needed to Effectively Integrate Marine Corps Forces into the U.S Special Operations Command*. GAO Report 07-1030, (September 5, 2007): 1.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> This institutional bias has been described throughout this paper and is primarily derived from the Marine Corps institutional belief that it is itself an elite/special force and the desire of Marine Commanders to not relinquish control of Marines to SOF Commanders or USSOCOM. In 2003 Commandant Hagee told the Senate Armed Services Committee "Our highly trained, cost-effective, first-on-the-scene forces provide a much needed special operations capability that is complimentary, not redundant, to the missions of our nation's SOF." In a November 2005 interview with Inside Defense Magazine, LtGen Jan Huly stated that "The most significant hurdle for the Marine Corps may simply be getting over the idea that Marines do not have special forces." Major Todd Simmons wrote in a 2006 Monograph for the US Army School of Advanced Military Studies that "The idea of a "special force" within the Corps is anathema to most assimilated into Marine culture." LtCol Mark Clark wrote in a 2003 Army War College Strategic Research Report that "Most people in the Marine Corps were pleased with the decision not to join SOCOM due to their fear of losing forces and funding, coupled with their animosity toward SOF."

Beyond bias, though, is the fact that Marine general purpose forces are losing some of the most highly trained Marines to MARSOC. At a Pentagon news briefing on December 5, 2007, General Conway was asked "Are you concerned that MARSOC may be taking some of your best people? And what does that do to your ability to have experienced officers and very skilled people in the Marine Corps? Conway responded: "Yes, 2,500 Marines with the qualifications that these guys have to have is painful, but the determination has been made that we will be players -- full players, as much as our numbers will allow -- in MARSOC. We have -- we have found that our investment is paying off already to a degree, based on the reputation these folks are achieving in Afghanistan." <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4101> Accessed 28 March 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Michael Vickers, *Implementing GWOT Strategy*, CSBA (Washington, DC, March 15, 2006): 1. The Director of Strategic Studies for the Center for Strategic and Budgeting Assessments, to the US House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee of Terrorism, Unconventional Threat and Capabilities, 15 March 2006. "The dominant form of the GWOT will be a protracted, indirect, and clandestine fight in scores of countries with which the US is not at war. The GWOT is an intelligence and SOF intensive war." <http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/T.20060315.ImplementingGWOT/T.20060315.ImplementingGWOT.pdf>

<sup>69</sup> Lackey, 31.

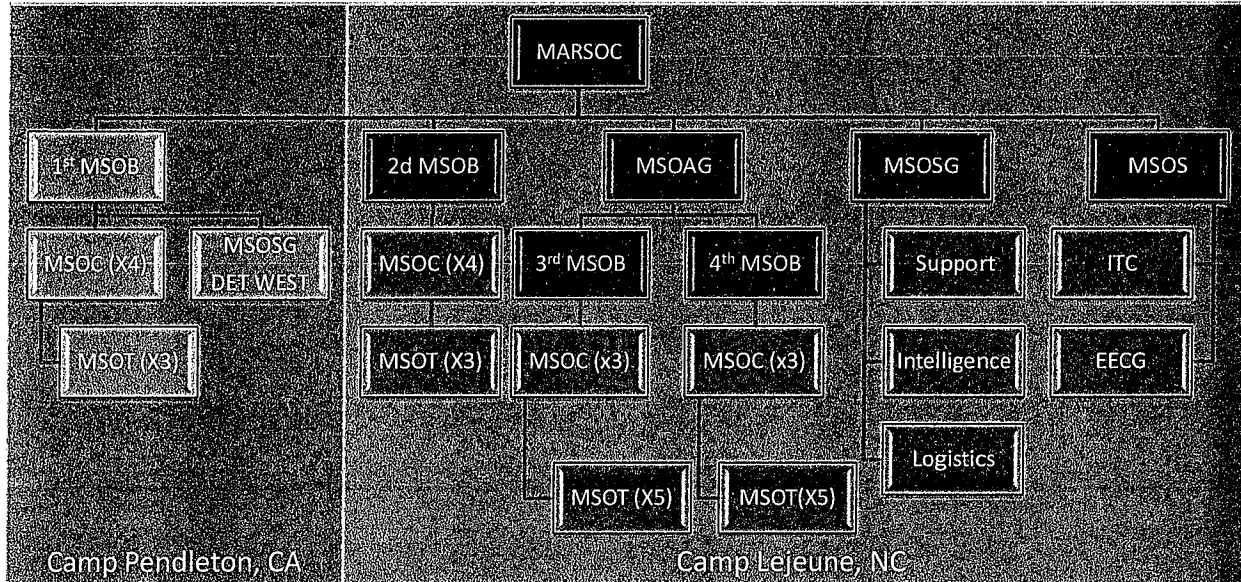
70. Joint Special Operations University presentation by Major Mark Raney for USSOCOM elective (lecture, MCU, Quantico VA 17 Feb 2009).

## Appendix A

### MARSOC Organization



# MARSOC ORGANIZATION



USMC	2290
USN	247
USA	2
CIV	49
IMA	30

\*Current T/O 2618

\* Increases – FY12-14

Provided by JSOU.

Abbreviations:

MSOB-Marine Special Operations Battalion

MSOS-Marine Special Operations School

MSOSG-Marine Special Operations Support Group

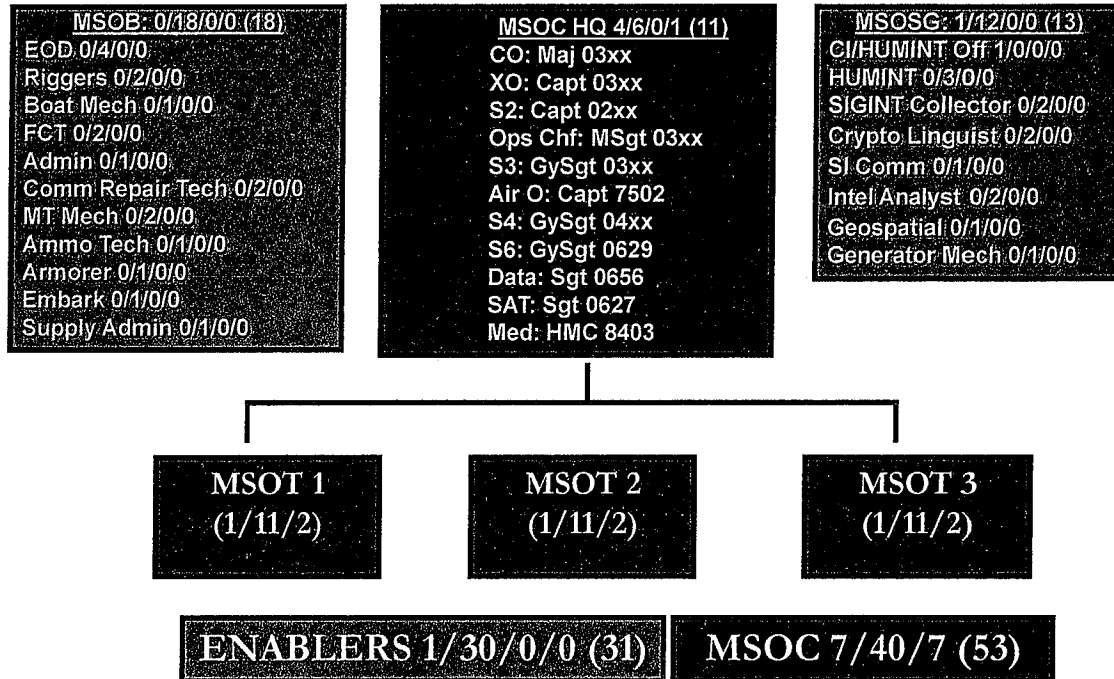
MSOAG (Formerly "Foreign Military Training Unit" or "FMTU") –Marine Special Operations Advisory Group

## Appendix B

### MSOC Organization



# New MSOC Structure



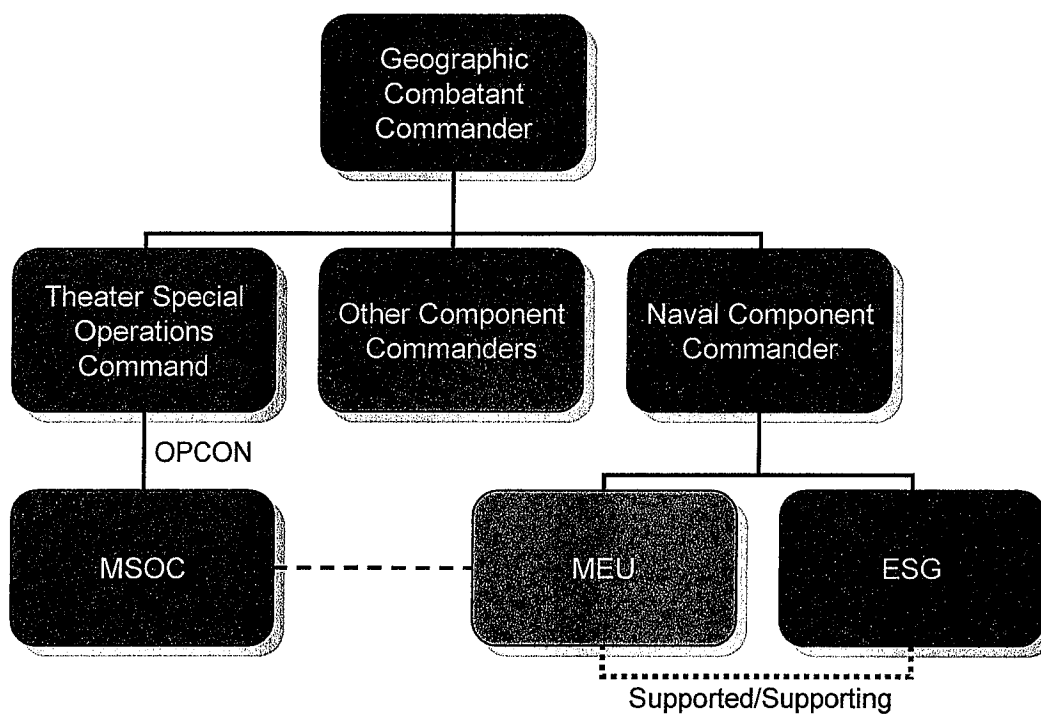
Unclassified

Provided by 1<sup>st</sup> MSOB

Abbreviations:

MSOT-Marine Special Operations Team

## Command Relationships



Unclassified//FOUO

Provided by 1<sup>st</sup> MSOB

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